

A27

WASHINGTON POST  
4 December 1985S Edwin M. Yoder Jr.

# Israel's 'Excessive Dependency'

Standing alone, the discovery that Israel has been buying U.S. Navy secrets might be dismissed as the equivalent of a "third-rate burglary"—as Israel clearly would like it to be.

The oddities of Israel's hiring, Jonathan Jay Pollard, would tend to support such a minimalist reading of the affair. As portrayed by friends, he emerges as an amateurish and sophomoric braggart, living in a world of James Bond fantasies and even boasting—falsely, one presumes—of a colonelcy in Israeli intelligence. The bagging of an agent so unlike Israel's storied professionals might normally mark the episode as an aberration.

But the Pollard case did not arise out of a vacuum. In the perspective of recent U.S.-Israeli relations, it can be taken as part of an increasingly unwholesome pattern: a pattern of excessive dependency in which impudence becomes a substitute for independence.

The pattern began taking shape in 1981, when by unfortunate coincidence the Israeli jingos got the upper hand even as the Reagan administration was giving Israel what amounted to a carte blanche for military adventure in the guise of self-defense.

The first result, from which much mischief has flowed, was the invasion of Lebanon, long desired but previously checked by Carter administration pressure. Maybe the United States did not actually give Israel the go-ahead. But no veto was exercised.

The Lebanese adventure was a calamity, for Israel as well as Lebanon. But as if to rub in his impenitence, its architect, Ariel Sharon, was soon parading a charge of "blood libel" against Time magazine in an American court—and this with full government financial backing. Official Israeli sponsorship of this escapade was revealing.

Meanwhile, in no particular order, the Israelis were brusquely rebuffing President Reagan's belated peace initiative for the West Bank; picking the week of a visit by King Hussein of Jordan to Washington for a bombing raid against PLO headquarters near Tunis; and, of course, petitioning Israel's friends in Congress to keep U.S. military and economic aid flowing. Indeed, in the aftermath of the Lebanon invasion, that aid was substantially augmented. U.S. taxpayers were, in effect, indemnifying Israel's self-inflicted economic wounds.

It was predictable that almost limitless indulgence in Washington would encourage all but limitless arrogance in Jerusalem. It is the all too familiar psychology of dependency, souring to resentment and aggressiveness.

No wise government expects gratitude of a friend and beneficiary. It is entitled, however, to expect discretion and self-restraint.

It is important, but hardly all-important, to know whether Pollard's paymasters were lower-level Israeli bureaucrats or top cabinet officials. That he was employed at all to steal U.S. military secrets reveals an attitude which, unchecked, could lead to dangerous estrangement.

Among the many undocumented suspicions afloat is that the Pollard channel was being used to tap, via Sixth-Fleet intelligence, into confidential U.S.-Egyptian military exercises. Does the foolishness of this need underscoring? The United States has been, and still is, the linchpin of peace-making between Israel and Egypt. Espionage that jeopardizes Egypt's confidence in U.S. good offices is recklessness of a rare order.

There is a school of thought that the Pollard affair should be brushed aside—left hanging in the hope it will be eclipsed by the next 24-hour wonder of a television story. Sunday's stilted exchange of bland pleasantries between Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Secretary of State George Shultz is part of the brushoff, no doubt.

But evasion is false friendship. Israel is drifting into the compromising position of an economic ward of the United States, whose resentment is taking rash forms. The Tunis raid was an example; the Pollard affair may be. Painful candor now may prevent dangerous strain later, and we should insist on no less.